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17 October 1949

MEMORANDUM FOR THE EXECUTIVE

VIA : Chief, COPS

SUBJECT: Distribution of the CIA Weekly Summary

1. Requests are received from time to time from present recipients of the CIA Weekly Summary for an increase in the number of copies sent to their organizations; requests are also received from newly created organizations for inclusion in the distribution. The decisions concerning such increases in the distribution have been made, up to this time, on a piecemeal, ad hoc basis. What is needed is a clearly defined policy on the scope and character of the distribution of the CIA Weekly Summary, in the light of which the present distribution can be reviewed and future decisions concerning its increase can be made.

2. A policy on the distribution of the CIA Weekly Summary must: (a) take into account the intended purpose of the Weekly Summary and for whom it is designed; and (b) make it possible to strike a balance between servicing as many qualified recipients as possible and satisfying the security requirements of both CIA and the agencies which provide the raw information.

a. The CIA Weekly Summary was intended at its inception to be a weekly analytic review of trends and developments of the topmost importance, designed in format and manner of presentation for the highest levels of the US Government. Despite later increases in the distribution, the Weekly Summary still conforms pretty much to this pattern. If the Weekly Summary is to continue to get the attention of top-level readers, it must continue to be designed primarily for them. It must, in other words, deal for the most part only with matters which affect US security quite directly; it must be kept relatively general and brief, holding technical terms and details to a minimum; it must take a broad, national view as opposed to a regional or departmental view. (It ought, if possible, to be a TOP SECRET publication so that it can discuss all the problems of concern to high-level personnel.) Such a publication can be of only limited usefulness to readers on a level below the one for which it is designed, although -- quite naturally and humanly -- it will be of interest to them all.

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b. Although there certainly can be no magic number for distribution of the CIA Weekly Summary which will precisely strike the necessary balance between optimum service and optimum security, there are limits beyond which security will not stretch. From a security point of view, an ideal distribution would include only the top-level personnel for whom the Weekly Summary is designed. Any extension of the distribution beyond that number ought to require a joint review by CIA and the intended recipient of the usefulness of the publication for his office. Unless usefulness or need -- not merely interest -- can be established, the individual ought not to be included in the distribution. Moreover, a decision ought to be made by CIA security personnel concerning the maximum limits to which the distribution of the Weekly Summary can be safely extended.

3. On the basis of the above considerations, it is recommended that:

a. A written policy for distribution of the CIA Weekly Summary be formulated either by an ad hoc committee or by the Coordination, Operations and Policy Staff, with provision being made in either event for full representation by the Publications Division.

b. A review of the present distribution be made by the above group and the revised list submitted to the DCI for approval and action.

c. A procedure be established by the above group for action on new requests for the Weekly Summary.

THEODORE BABBITT
Assistant Director for
Reports and Estimates

CONCUR:

Assistant Director for Collection and
Dissemination

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